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HIST 372-002: Contemporary Europe

Svanur Petursson

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Contemporary Europe

Svanur Pétursson

svanur.petursson@gmail.com

Office: Zoom from Brooklyn

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays by Appt.

History 372

Mondays/Wednesdays 11.00-12.20

Synchronous Online

Spring 2021

Course Description:

Contemporary Europe is today comprised of over 40 countries (44 to be exact according to the United Nations), each with their individual national histories, yet each tied together by shared global and often national interests. However, for a large part of the 20th century, Europe was divided both politically and economically into an East and a West; between a communist political system organized around central state planning in the East, and the capitalist liberal democracies of the West. Things would dramatically change with the fall of the Iron curtain and the end of the Cold War in 1989/91 which renewed the idea(l) of a common Europe, reigniting hopes of a truly United Europe. The last three decades have witnessed the attempts to create that ideal, specifically through the supranational European Union, which today consists of 27 member states from both the old West and the East. This course will focus on these last three decades, focusing on two interrelated themes; the creation and function of the European Union as a unifying factor, and the legacy of Communism not only for the former Communist countries of the East, but also how that has colored the attitudes of the “West” towards those countries.

Course Objectives:

The students of the course will analyze historical events and movements of Contemporary European history and assess their subsequent significance. Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills to analyze information, especially when it comes to current news sources covering contemporary Europe. Additionally students will learn how to synthesize historical and geographical information acquired through the understanding of maps and primary source information.

Course Goals:

Upon completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental concepts and theories of historical events and ideas related to Contemporary Europe.

- Evaluate the social, political, religious, and intellectual traditions of the various countries of modern day Europe
- Read, analyze, organize and synthesize, evidence, historical problems, and interpretations connected to the history of Contemporary Europe.

Required Textbooks:

Pinder, John and Simon Usherwood: *European Union: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. (2007). This book is available Online through the NJIT library website.

Ther, Phillip: *Europe Since 1989: A History*. Princeton University Press (2016). This book is available through online retailers, and as an e-book for around \$15.

The rest of the material will be posted on the Canvas site either as links or as Pdf documents.

Course Requirements:

The course will be heavily weighted towards discussion throughout the semester, and students are expected to be well prepared for each class session. This will not be a simple lecture class, although there will be occasional short lectures, scattered through the semester. Each class session we will discuss the major themes and ideas of the assigned readings, and once a week we will also discuss the major news events from Europe (the instructor will provide links to each week's news readings the previous Friday). Therefore active participation is expected and required each week. Students will write three short reaction papers on that week's European news during the semester, with the top two grades counting towards the final grade (each reaction papers worth 10% of the final grade). There will also be one midterm exam and then a final exam, but for those exams students will receive a comprehensive guide to prepare for them.

Grading;

In-class participation: 20%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

News Reaction Papers: 20%

Grade scale is as follows:

A: 90 points and higher

B+: 85-89.99

B: 80-84.99

C+: 75-79.99

C: 70-74.99

D: 60-69.99

F: 59.99 and lower

Attendance:

Attendance is required and attendance will be taken at the start of every class.

If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is passing off someone else's work as your own and will not be tolerated. Students are expected to write their own original work and to give credit in the form of footnotes (i.e. citations) for any material that is not their own. Plagiarized assignments will be given an automatic "0" with no possibility of a rewrite. Violations will be brought to the immediate attention of the Dean of Students and adjudicated in accordance with the NJIT Honor Code.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Week 1

January 20th: Introduction

Week 2

January 25th

Readings: EU – Chapter 1: What the EU is for

January 27th:

Readings: EU – Chapter 2: How the EU was made

Week 3

February 1st:

Readings: EU – Chapter 3: How the EU is governed

February 3rd

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 4

February 8th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 1: Introduction (optional)
Ther – Chapter 2: Where the East Meets the West

February 10th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 5

February 15th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 3: The Revolutions of 1989-91

February 17th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 6

February 22nd:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 4: Getting on the Neoliberal Bandwagon

February 24th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 7

March 1st:

Readings: Tony Judt – The Grand Illusion (Pdf on Canvas)

March 3rd:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 8

March 8th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 5: Second Wave Neoliberalism (part 1), p. 112-132

March 10th

Readings: EU: Chapter 4 – Single Market, Single Currency

Week 9
SPRING BREAK

March 21st: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 10

March 22nd:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 5: Second Wave Neoliberalism (part 2), p. 132-160

March 24th:

Readings: EU – Chapter 5: Agriculture, regions, budget: conflicts over who gets what

Week 11

March 29th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 6: Capital Cities Compared

March 31st:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 12

April 5th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 7: The Great Recession: 2009-9 and Its Consequences

April 7th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 13

April 12th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 8: Southern Europe: The New East?

April 14th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

Week 14

April 19th:

Readings: EU – Chapter 7: ‘An area of freedom, security, and justice’

April 21st:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 9: Cotransformation: The Case of Germany

Week 15

April 26th:

Readings: Ther – Chapter 10: The Roads Not Taken

April 28th:

Readings: News Discussion (links in description)

FINAL Exam: Exam date to be decided based on final exam schedule